

sowing seeds of closer communication among
Nebraskans working to ensure dignity,
choice and quality of life for persons with
developmental disabilities

From the Directors Desk. . .

What a fabulous Spring! We continue to see positive things happening at BSDC and in the community.

In this edition of the Sower, you will meet Tiffany Earl (aka Cooke). While Cookie struggles with more physical challenges and barriers in her life than anyone I have ever met, she constantly amazes others by refusing to dwell on herself — Instead, Cookie puts her energies into helping others and encourages us to do the same.

Employment and opportunities for full community inclusion continue to be a goal of the Division. On pages 2 and 6, you can see some of the exciting things going on in this area that are being sponsored by the DD Council and the Alliance for Full Participation. I encourage you to get involved!

Speaking of involved, adult transition students in Omaha and Council Bluffs, in collaboration with VODEC, were awarded a grant from the Omaha Green Coalition for conservation and recycling activities in their community. This team proves that people with disabilities can be sup-

ported to achieve their own personal full potential AND they also contribute positively to the community at large. People with developmental disabilities bring considerable value to our communities, and we appreciate being able to share some of those examples with you.

Another group of people who contribute considerably to the community, in addition to the impacts they make directly on the lives of people we support, are our staff in the Division. Starting in May, we began a monthly recognition program entitled “You Make a Difference,” so that we can honor these

fabulous staff for their contributions. Please join me in expressing gratitude for the individuals recognized this month on pages 4 and 5. While we receive nominations primarily from coworkers in the Division, you are welcome to nominate a staff member you have a positive experience with. These people are sincerely dedicated to improving the lives of others, and we simply could not function without them!

Thanks for allowing us to partner with you!

Jodi M. Fenner

THANK YOU!

A special thank you and congratulations needs to go to Loree Crouse and Jesse Bjerrum. It is under the leadership of these two individuals that the first three ICF/MR's at BSDC are on their way to being certified. One ICF/MR is fully certified and the other two have passed their first certification survey. Thank you Lori and Jesse for your strong leadership.



Pictured above: Jesse Bjerrum Pictured to the Left: Loree Crouse

Employment Information Gathering Initiative

Nebraska DD Council

Collaborative &

The CSI Network

You're Invited! Please Join Me!

My name is Darla Wilkerson, owner and lead consultant for The Consulting Services & Information Network (The CSI Network). I am located in Kansas City, MO and it is my pleasure to invite you to attend a focus group gathering that will assist in providing feedback about how employment is impacting individuals with developmental disabilities in the state of Nebraska. I have been given the honor to work under contract for the NE Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities to gather and analyze information from various people

throughout the state. The overall goal of the project is to increase coordination of employment services and supports and maximize their effectiveness. My intent is to gather and analyze information about the current status of employment services and where the collaborative efforts are, looking at how to improve upon and replicate them throughout Nebraska. If you would like to know more about me, visit my website at www.thecsi-network.com.

In order to make this initiative successful I need the assistance of people who are impacted by employment services, you are the experts on what makes that successful. Your expertise is very much needed by participating in an hour focus

group with other members of your community. Time sessions will fill up fast so RSVP to me at dwilkerson46@aol.com or 816-284-3224. Let me thank you in advance for your assistance. I know your time is valuable and your commitment to better the employment outcomes for all individuals with developmental disabilities is very much appreciated. The following is a schedule of area focus groups.

June 27, 28th Norfolk, NE
June 29th 30th Omaha, NE
Location to be determined!

Refreshments will be provided!

BSDC Fun in the Sun

You're invited for fun in the sun June 4th, 2011 from 9am-2pm. BSDC will host a morning softball game followed by a free picnic-style lunch. Hope to see you there !

•9:30am-Softball Game (Equipment provided)

•11:00am-Picnic Lunch

Ball field located on the southeast corner of BSDC...Look for signs
Contact person: Cary D. Udell 223-6917



Services Spotlight: Tiffany Earl

My name is Tiffany Earl but I go by Cookie for my mother has been calling me Cookie all my life, all my 22 years pretty much. By the way, she is the one typing these words for me but I am in them completely.

Anyway, I was born with a form of Muscular Dystrophy: a form of Myopathy, it is a rare form so we don't have a label for it and to be honest, it does not matter or alter my cares I receive or the love I receive and have to give.

I communicate with the world around me by using my eyes and by raising my heart rate to make my oximeter alarm. I have been doing this from a young age. I have more or less developed my own way of communicating with others, my own language, one might say. My Mom tells people what to expect and I go from there with them and with my Mom's help. Most of my caregivers, nurses who are also like family to us, know how to talk to me and so does my dad. As long as you watch my eyes, we are in business!!

Talking about business... I have started my own Charity, which is called Kind Moments just this past February with the help of the Department of Health and Human Services. Of course, I have my Mom and Nan Byers, I call her my business assistant, helping me. My intention is to donate any profit we make with our crafts to local charities: 100% of it. So far we have managed to have all our materials donated. The first organization I picked to donate to was The Salvation Army. I have been collecting donations of any sort the past two

Christmas for them. The donations have come from my nurses, friends, former teachers, my Mom and me. I like what they stand for and I have a great friend who is part of the Salvation Army, his name is Curt Johnson.

I hope to make a difference in people's lives through my charity and your donations; show the people in need that we care and everyone matters at any time, not just during Christmas or disaster times. Kind Moments is to reflect love for all. Some people ask me why, when and how I started this. I have been fortunate to have been read books and watched movies on Mother Theresa and her mission. She inspired me and since a very young age, around 10, my Mom and I decided to make collections for charities. One of the first organizations we donated to was the Open Door Mission and we have been doing something one way or another since then.

Once I was done with school, I

was offered by the State of Nebraska the opportunity of "having a job" and I decided that my job was to create a charity. I want it to be my mission while I am around here, on this side of heaven, I mean. Right now, we are working on making "bird bags", that is what we call them. Nan brought me the idea and I liked it a lot. I pick the design, I mean, the material, the color and how it should look. I like to say that I supervise her and my Mom while they are making them. I guess I am the boss on this one!!! These bags are to be hung from a tree to provide birds with material to make their nests. Inside these bags we have dryer lint, cut up fabric and yarn. We place it all in a mesh bag and there we have it! My Mom likes to say that we are helping the nestless and the homeless.

I would like to ask and encourage you who are reading this to consider donating to our community whenever possible. I like to think that any contribution amounts to something.



★ YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE ★

Division of Developmental Disabilities Employees of the Month!

Tiffany Barrett – BSDC – State Building

Tiffany Barrett, DTSS, is responsible for active treatment monitoring. Her audits are completed thoroughly, and even when it is necessary to convey criticism, her coworkers indicate that she always communicates results tactfully and respectfully. Recently, Tiffany acted on her own initiative to assist Home Managers with scheduling challenges. This has helped the State Building team in bridging staffing gaps and creating a more harmonious working environment. Tiffany consistently demonstrates the team spirit that has led State Building to be our first fully-certified ICF!



Terry Briggs – BSDC - Solar Cottages

Terry Briggs, DTSS, has proven to be a valuable team member and is willing to support the homes as necessary. During the last month, Terry has gone out of his way in assisting staff through voluntary overtime, working on 5 separate occasions through the living unit staffing pool. Terry has also been instrumental in providing training to a new Developmental Technician Shift Supervisor. He does an excellent job when working with staff members as well as the individuals we provide services to. He is consistently calm and respectful, yet direct, in his job duties. Terry has proven to be a strong asset to the Solar Cottages team!



Lynn Chelewski – BSDC - Sheridan Cottages

Lynn Chelewski, DTII, has been committed to ensuring a successful federal survey, working extended hours to provide assistance and guidance to less tenured staff. Lynn has also recently provided enhanced supports to an individual struggling with unique challenges. This individual's family and Lynn's coworkers have commended Lynn's tireless efforts to ensure this individual received the care and support he needed. Lynn is also a recognized as an excellent MANDT instructor who is often relied upon as a resource to his Sheridan Cottages team.



Nicole Spilker – BSDC – State Cottages

Nicole Spilker, DTII, has been very proactive in establishing new working procedures for 413 State. Nicole has taken an active role in guiding the home in ensuring success in the certification process, and she **always** has a positive attitude. Nicole is outspoken and honest in wanting to succeed in certification, and she realizes that an important key to success is maintaining a positive environment for both the staff and the people who live in the State Cottages. Nicole's positivity is contagious!

Brenda Russell – BSDC - Kennedy Building

Brenda Russell, DTII, has been instrumental in creating a team environment on 108 Kennedy's second shift. Brenda's willingness to support the home is demonstrated through the time that she dedicates to the individuals and staff in Kennedy. She consistently works to help others learn new skills and participate in meaningful activities. Brenda's dedication to BSDC is greatly appreciated, and her coworkers claim that she is the BEST!



Andrew Ashelford – BSDC Central Services

Andrew, dietitian, has been with BSDC for almost a year. In this time, he has become a valuable member of the BSDC team and has stepped up to leadership roles in several large projects. He served as a Mealtime Coach for Solar Cottages, and created a comprehensive training program for home leadership to teach mealtime safety. He is working with others to create short training videos for home staff about vital care issues like safe transfers, PNCS, dining cards, diet textures, and many other topics. He is now leading a workgroup with Scott Founts to define, develop and standardize competency-based education programs campus-wide. Additionally, he provides clinical dietitian services to several ICFs on campus. Andrew is truly an asset on our team!



Jana Deines – Western Service District



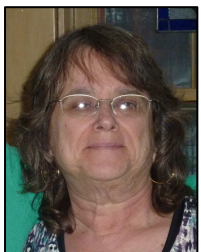
Team player is a descriptor that would be fitting for Jana Deines, service coordinator in Sidney. She is committed to working toward common goals and reaching out to the other team members to create a supportive environment. She is the person you can go to when you need help. When we recently needed coverage for an SC who was out for an extended period of time, Jana offered to provide the support that was needed. She was in uncharted territory for herself, but she didn't let that dampen her spirit of team giving. Jana's collaboration is often noted by others, including the leadership in our local provider agency. Jana is a valuable asset in many teams - personal, work and community!

Lyndee Haertel – Southeast Service District

Lyndee Haertel, a service coordinator in Lincoln, took on the challenge of covering an open service coordination caseload in Nebraska City, while continuing to ensure the individuals she supports in Lincoln received quality supports. She was able to assure that Individual Plans were developed and implemented in Nebraska City so that no one experienced disruptions in services. Lyndee then assisted the new service coordinator in getting to know the Nebraska City program and the individuals she will be serving. Lyndee can always be counted on to step-up when needed!



Debbie Kosmicki – Eastern Service District



Debbie Kosmicki, a service coordinator supervisor in Omaha, maintains an amazingly positive manner in every aspect of her work. When others feel overwhelmed, she offers assistance and encouragement. She is always willing to help out a coworker and responds as if it is her privilege to support them. She is highly organized and has embraced the new process of individual annual budgets, maximizing the flexibility it provides to the people she supports. Debbie is an inspiration to the individuals she works with!

Jan McHale – Central Service District

Jan McHale, a staff assistant in the Hastings office, brings enthusiasm, professionalism, efficiency, and a positive work ethic to her workplace every day. Her experience and interpersonal skills are the foundation of Jan's ability to build teamwork to support the work of Service Coordination across the state. She promotes the Division through partnerships with the larger community. Jan has also provided support to the Division's leadership in terms of SC policies and procedures development. Jan's efforts may seem to be "behind-the-scenes," but she clearly impacts services to people all across the state!



Kaylene Finney – BSDC Transition Team

Kaylene Finney, a service coordinator in Lincoln, works diligently to ensure that the people she supports get what they need **and** desire. She listens intently to individuals and their families, and she communicates often and effectively with the teams that she works with. Kaylene is not afraid to "think outside the box" and diligently advocates to ensure that people are equipped to successfully transition into the community. She is awesome!

The Alliance for Full Participation (AFP) is a formal partnership of leading organizations with a common vision of creating a better and more fulfilling quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities. AFP supports a network of state teams, with the current national goal of doubling the rate of employment of people with intellectual disabilities by the year 2015 (baseline year 2010). This document will provide you with an update on the work of the Nebraska AFP team.

In May of 2010, the Nebraska AFP team held a strategic planning session to develop a work plan to accomplish the goal of doubling the rate of competitive, community employment of Nebraskans with intellectual disabilities. Five work groups were established as a result:

Data Collection Work Group (Working to establish a reliable and accurate data collection system to serve first as a baseline, and then as a gauge for progress.)

This work group is devoting time to establishing an electronic data collection system, incorporating various components on the IPP in order to capture whether a person has integrated employment.

Policies Work Group (Working to create policies that prioritize employment and promote these policies among all stakeholders.)

This work group is developing methods to share information about policy changes that can have a positive impact on employment outcomes.

Benefits Planning Work Group (Working to ensure people in services and their supporters have access to effective, efficient, and ongoing benefits planning.)

The Benefits Planning Work Group has developed four strategies:

- Train all provider staff (including administrators) and DDD service coordinators with “conversational level” information.
- Ensure that job seekers, their supporters, and provider agency staff have access to responsive and credentialed work incentives specialists.
- Fund the accessible and cost effective model of work incentives planning and assistance.
- Develop and implement a system of quality assurance.

The work group is collaborating with Work Incentives Network (WIN) efforts initiated through Nebraska’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, including consults with MIG colleagues from the state of Washington and with the NCHSD. The work group is examining the business logic of Medicaid Waiver dollars serving as a funding source for benefits planning.

Collaboration Work Group (Working to ensure discovery, utilization and coordination of available resources.)

The collaboration group assembled a small group in the Omaha metro area to consider a proposal to increase coordination and effective practices in transition. This group included several area educators who have responsibility for employment and work experience programs. Further planning is underway to formalize a proposal for a demonstration project in transition and identify grant sources to fund the work. This project could be replicated in other communities in the future.

Outreach Work Group (Working to establish strong outreach, education and support among all key stakeholders.)

This work group is developing a brochure to make available to school districts and transition teams to use at IEP meetings during the transition years. The brochure will include success stories and resources. We also plan to provide a series of presentations highlighting employment success stories from around the state, and resources for employment.

For more information visit www.allianceforfullparticipation.org or contact Susan Rocker at rockers@missouri.edu.

Adult Transition Students Go Green and Get a Grant!

By Pam Monsky, VODEC

The scene was Elmwood Park in Omaha. The occasion was Earth Day 2011. Adult Transition students from Council Bluffs Community Schools were awarded a \$500 grant from the Omaha Green Coalition for developing a program to save energy in their classroom and around the VODEC work center in Council Bluffs! This is the second year in a row the students have received the grant. Last year, they used the money to purchase recycling stations for the work center. Please join us in congratulating the students for their wonderful work!

Vocational Development Center, or VODEC, is a non-profit organization providing vocational, residential and day-habilitation

services for people with disabilities which enable them to gain employment and live independently.

Our mission is to provide services to persons with disabilities so those persons may live, work and participate in the community in the least restrictive environment to achieve their full potential. The purpose of VODEC is to support and advocate for persons with disabilities so those persons have opportunities to develop to their fullest potential, to interact with society, to ex-

perience a sense of belonging, and to contribute something of themselves at their own level of ability.

We provide vocational, residential and day services for adults with developmental disabilities. We have three workshop locations, 2 in Omaha; 1 in Council Bluffs. We currently serve 500 individuals and have 150 employees. For more information, please visit our website: www.vodec.org



Above Picture: Students and ATP Coordinator Martha Most (center) pose with Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle (2nd from left)

Left Picture: The students, joined by VODEC CEO Steve Hodapp (center) are presented with a giant check!

Division of Developmental Disabilities

301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

Calendar of Events!

JUNE

- 2 AFP—Setting Employment as the 1st Priority Webinar
- 9 AFP—Nebraska Employers: What do they need from us Webinar
- 27 & 28 Employment DD Grant Focus Group, Norfolk
- 29 & 30 Employment DD Grant Focus Group, Omaha

JULY

- 26 Nebraska Provider Network Meeting, Kearney

AUGUST

- 19 DD Advisory Committee Meeting, Lincoln LLB

If you have any items you would like us to add to the calendar please email to Tyla.Vogt@nebraska.gov. Thank you!

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